

PEOPLE and THINGS: By ATTICUS

runners who adhere strictly to the hard-beaten courses. When Sir John arrived as a guest for dinner at the Palace Hotel, the other guests, who



SIR JOHN HUNT

were mostly Swiss, rose to their feet and cheered him.

People and Words

"Diaries are dangerous things. Perhaps, like love-letters, they should be torn up the following morning!"

—FIELD-MARSHAL LORD ALANBROOKE.

"British people should be helped to drink more port."

—DR. REGINALD BENNETT, M.P.

"If only the general public will drink as much milk as I do a day I think there would be no trouble for years."

—MR. HEATHCOTE AMORY, M.P., Minister of Agriculture.

"I do not contend that one can speak the whole truth and nothing but the truth... sometimes you should withhold it and bear the burden yourself."

—THE BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM.

"This long and distressing controversy (over capital punishment) is very unfair to anyone meditating murder."

—THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

play, "The Crystal Heart." The play may have had its defects, but is there any actress on the British stage more deservedly loved than Miss Cooper? Her charm and good humour seem to be enhanced by the unrelenting years.

What chance would an actor have with Hamlet's famous



MISS GLADYS COOPER

soliloquy if the gallery were decided to take part?

Hamlet: To be, or not to be; that is the question.

A gallery wit: The sixty-four thousand question!

The actor, being committed to the author, cannot rebuke the loud but must say his lines as set down. Yet in the meantime the whole place is suffering from nerves, while the essential unity of audience and actors is gone beyond recovery.

Softly and Silently

They manage these things better in New York. Not long ago I attended the Broadway first night of a new play which was a very poor piece indeed. No one in the audience made any sound but after the first interval they just disappeared. In fact, when the curtain went up for the last act I felt like the mad King Ludwig of Bavaria who

had Wagner's operas performed for him alone in his castle.

Therefore, I boo the boosers. As for Miss Cooper, I borrow the favourite words of the Emperor Franz Josef and lay myself at her feet.

A Mass in Maida Vale

BY contrast let me take you to a strange event which took place last week-end in the B.B.C. studio in Maida Vale. The setting was something between the pillars of a ruined cathedral and the walls of a modern factory.

Sir Malcolm Sargent, in a short jacket instead of his usual tails, talked amiably to the tenor soloist, whose collar was

unbuttoned to give him greater freedom. The bass violinists had discarded their jackets, but the cellists preserved their sartorial decorum.

With two minutes to go the place was hushed and there was a nervous tension as Sargent raised his baton and called for the first soft notes of the strings. Thus began the rendition of the beautiful and little-known "La Petite Messe Solennelle" by Rossini, as the principal feature of the B.B.C. Third Programme.

Seven Thousand Strokes

There is a strong suspicion among the laity that orchestral conductors are primarily actors

and ballet dancers who perform for the eyes of the audience while the orchestra does the work. Had they been present at Maida Vale they would have abandoned such unworthy thoughts.

Sir Malcolm never relaxed for a moment, unless to achieve a pianissimo, and his baton was like the sword of d'Artagnan in a duel with the Cardinal's Guards. With only one short break he conducted for an hour, and when it was over he looked limp and exhausted—which raises an interesting point. At a rough calculation he must, during his performance, have swung or waved or thrust his baton at

least 7,000 times. Most of these movements were the physical equivalent of a golfer's drive, but, of course, there were some mashie shots and even some short putts.

But what golfer could endure the strain of striking the ball 7,000 times in the first nine holes of a round? Indeed it would seem physically impossible. Sir Malcolm's own explanation is that the brain is so concentrated upon the music that it has no time to receive the message from the muscles that they are tired. He admits that to conduct the same score with no musicians present would be a physical impossibility.

Lord Hore-Belisha

THE death of Lord Hore-Belisha in France ends a career which promised a dazzling success but which ended in frustration, loneliness and weariness. Now I can shed some light upon his dismissal from the War Office.

As an old friend he consulted me when Neville Chamberlain told him that reluctantly he had to ask him to give up the War Office and if he was agreeable to take on instead the post of President of the Board of Trade.

Hore-Belisha had done a brilliant job by clearing the way for the promotion of younger generals to positions of high authority. He was determined that for once Britain would not fight a war with generals from a previous war. "What should I do?" he asked.

To his obvious irritation I said that his resignation would be a sensational story for the morning newspapers, a big story for the evenings and nothing much more than an obituary notice in the week-end publications. Therefore he should take the Board of Trade which is a most important department in war as well as in peace. Nothing, however, would move him.

The Forgotten Disraeli

He believed so completely in his star that he even visualised a palace revolution which would place him on the political throne.

It was the virtual end of his career. He had the qualities of mind to carry him to the heights, but like many men of genius he had grave defects of temperament.

In the twilight years of bitter disillusionment after the war he would retire from time to time to a monastery and take a vow of silence. As a young man he saw himself as a second

A Farewell

WORDS are strange things. On Thursday morning at St. Margaret's, Westminster, John Boyd-Carpenter paid tribute to the late Sir David Gammans, M.P. He made no attempt at oratory but spoke in clear simple terms of a colleague and old friend.

Just near the end of his short address he paused for a moment and then without any change of expression or voice he said: "We are here today to say goodbye to David Gammans for a time... May God rest his soul and may God comfort those whom he loved."

In their brevity and in their faith the words touched both the mind and the heart. Even Elgar's music that followed seemed remote for once.

Downhill

NEWS reaches me from Switzerland that Sir John Hunt, the leader of the Everest Expedition, has added further lustre to his name. While spending his first winter holidays in the Alps for many years he accomplished ten descents of the Schilthorn in one day. To understand the immensity of this achievement one need only recall that a moderately good ski-er would regard three or four descents as a good performance, since the feat involves 18,000 feet of downhill running.

The following day he and Lady Hunt climbed the Schilthorn on sealskins—much to the surprise of the "plateferous"